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TO THE EDITOR:

What I would like to present here is not an argument for student demonstrations or against the War or the CIA, but rather an expression of just what it is that is happening to and in those of us who are convinced that our government is riding American society along an immoral — and for us, unacceptable — path of destruction.

Historically we can understand what is happening now in terms of the frustration produced by the Johnson administration's handling of the war. Having been elected as a dove, Johnson proceeded to contradict his every campaign promise by enlarging the War. As legitimate political protests increased, the government took an offensively defensive pose attacking the "nervous nellies" of the intellectual community. Despite repeated protests to stop the senseless destruction in Vietnam, the government unrelentlessly pursued its policy of continual escalation — while at the same time allowing the credibility gap to widen with the War.

It was this latter which really generated the greatest tension among the war's opponents. For the very basis of the liberal tradition is to admit that the other person may be as right as you are or at least recognize that he *thinks* he is as moral as you *think* you are. As Johnson repeatedly distorted issue after issue, the opponents of the War lost confidence in the honesty of the Administration, and found it futile to approach the government through traditional and political channels.

As a result the gulf between actions that are morally exacting and politically effective widened so enormously that we now find ourselves in an either/or situation: for or against our government and our society. If we want to be effective we have to play the game; if we want to be moral we have to shake our heads.

But most of us want neither to lie nor to remain on the outside — for closing one's eyes doesn't make the blood any less red. Since the problem is the gap, the solution must begin with a bridge: personal — meaning moral and political — confrontation.

This is the problem that is being acted out on the college campus today.

Last winter, students — enraged at the use of napalm in Vietnam — picketed the Dow recruiter when he came to Brown. They asked the man from Dow to answer questions on the company's attitude toward its monopoly on napalm. The Dow interviewer replied that company policy was to refuse to speak on that issue. The confrontation at that time was unsuccessful — not because we were not open to the interviewer, but because he refused to be open to us. And this same scenario — peaceful picketing, written statements and questions, and on the other side refusals to be honest or to speak at all — repeated itself at other schools across country with Dow and the CIA.

After one year of this, the CIA was scheduled to return to Brown. CAC presented arguments to U.H. why the CIA should not be allowed to recruit on campus, and asked the Administration to deny it the use of Brown campus facilities. But rather than face the real issues involved in CIA recruitment, Dr. Heffner and Dean Brennan preferred to offer bureaucratic bromides: "Where would we draw the line if . . ."

To pretend that Dow or CIA recruitment falls within the purview of legitimate University functions is to ignore that it is Dow that refuses to discuss the meaning of napalm, not us; that it is the CIA that refuses to discuss how it influences American foreign policy, or why it illegally interferes in domestic affairs (the NSA scandal) — not us. It is also to ignore the meaning of the War, of napalm, and of subterfuge.

How can it be said that students who prevent these companies or government organizations from recruiting on campus are infringing on anyone's *academic* freedom?

(There is, of course, an enormous difference between preventing a man from coming onto campus — as in the Brown demonstration — and holding him virtualy captive — as at Harvard and Oberlin. It is the very real difference between disrupting a bureaucratic process and threatening a man, between burning a draft card and terrorizing members of a draft board.)

The confrontation with the CIA was not a confrontation with the CIA: it was a confrontation with Dr. Heffner, Dean Brennan and the Brown faculty. The students knew that the CIA representative was not going to answer questions, was not going to be honest. As far as the CIA was involved the sit-in was designed to register frustrations and disgust with government policies, and to prevent recruitment. But the sit-in tried to do far more than that: for it tried to be a confrontation. The people being confronted, however, were the deans.

The deans are being confronted because we want to know *why* ROTC is given academic credit at Brown, *why* the CIA is permitted to recruit on campus, *why* Dow is not told that it must abide by the rules of an academic institution if it wishes to use the facilities of that institution. This is what we want to know, and we have asked President Heffner and Dean Schulze innumerable times to give us answers. It is the administration and the faculty that will not talk about Vietnam, or about the University — not us.

* * *

But I did not write this letter as an apologia for last week's demonstration. I wrote it because Monday's editorial (Confrontation I) failed even to attempt to deal with the personal, the moral aspects of the problem. The problem with higher education and with American society in general is that problems and situations are dissected analytically — as in all of the above — and never in reference to what is happening to the people involved. Thus with a shift of tone, a shift of mood, a shift of myself, I am going to try to express that personal and moral dimension. And this is addressed primarily to the administrators and faculty members of this University.

* * *

I have a draft card with a 2-S.

I can sit in my apartment in Cambridge, attend classes at Harvard, date on weekends, think, read, listen to records, eat what I want when I want. I have spent much of my time over the past two years "opposing" the war in Vietnam and the incredible influence it has had on our domestic policy. I wrote editorials. I worked for a peace candidate. I contribute a few dollars to have my name — along with several thousand others — printed in the Providence *Journal* and the N. Y. *Times*. I even refuse to pay the U.S. tax on my telephone bill (a tax levied especially for the Vietnam War).

But what has this achieved, what has this meant? In political terms it means that I have worked *within* the system, that I have recognized the need — my own and that of other people — for an organized society even on the order of America's technological monstrosity. I have worked within the accepted limits of the 1960's: Dean Schulze and maybe even my own draft board can nod when I speak of my C.O. application and of my activities.

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Inside Confrontation

But it all seems to have achieved very little. The University administration has yet *seriously* to question whether Dow or CIA should be allowed on campus as long as it refuses to meet students in public discussions; the Johnson administration has yet *seriously* to acknowledge that opponents of the war in Vietnam and of American foreign policy are any more than "nervous nellies." The men and women of Vietnam are napalmed daily. The CIA — it was revealed last week — supports the *entire* Far Eastern studies program at Columbia University. The apartheid government of South Africa is still secure. What I have done . . . looks like nothing much.

It's a little something, though. "Opposing" the war actually relieved me of any feeling of responsibility for the destruction going on in Vietnam — and I felt fairly clean for quite a while. While walking the streets of Manhattan last April 15, I believed that such purely "moral" demonstrations would — by the sheer force of their moral legitimacy — help achieve the goal: less murder, less destruction, more sanity in U.S. foreign and domestic policy.

But that goal, I suddenly realized last spring, can no longer possibly be effected through the traditional, politically acceptable forms of protest. And the question — the brutal, terrifying question that I have yet to have the courage to answer but which I know I must answer — arises: given the present situation in the U.S., can any action be considered moral that is not effective in stopping the barraging war machine? And stopping it now.

I do not want to go to jail. I want to finish working for my Ph.D.; I want to get marired; I want to find a job and I want to think, write and teach. These few ideas, wishes are me: so thoroughly me that they are the basis of my daily existence. I study enough so that I understand my work; I date enough so I can try to love someone else and her work. This is me.

But the outrage: the outrage that the United States could burn people to death, could destroy women and children with machines in the sky, could ignore millions of desperate, frightened and hungry people both in the U.S. and abroad — that outrage is me also. And I have a slight suspicion, though I have yet to admit it to myself, that that outrage — with all the *positive* value it implies — is a far better person than my other person.

I have not yet decided to turn in my draft card. I have not yet decided to join in other forms of civil disobedience; I did not go down to Washington, I did not sit-in either at Harvard or Brown. I have, quite frankly, been scared to do any of these. For to return my draft card, or to join in civil disobedience means in a very real sense losing my life, means letting go of all my plans, all the wishes. And that is terribly frightening.

I understand that Stan Griffith and some of my other friends at Brown are possibly facing disciplinary action for sitting-in against the CIA recruiter. The arguments I presented earlier about the legitimacy of Dow or the CIA recruiting on a University campus might be used to defend these students or at least to plead for leniency. But, as I also said, that is not the point of any of this.

The point is that these students have decided that their moral lives — their outrage — is more of a life than the safety of legal undergraduate deferments. They have decided to stop playing the politics of the self.

That decision is not a simple one: rather, it is terrifying. Because once you leave the comfort of being in the game, there is no going back in. When Stan burned his draft card, he made an irrevocable decision. He is outside now and he can't come back — even if he wanted to. The terror is that I know and he knows — we all know — that he might just be wrong. He might just be wrong.

The decision to move from socially acceptable dissent to political and moral resistance is not a simple one: it is terrifying.

I began this letter as a response to your editorial. I wanted to show you that what it looks like from the outside — from where you were writing — is not what it looks like from the inside. Since I am at this moment coming to this basic confrontation with myself, I thought I would try to explain to you, to the administration and to whoever else cares to listen what it is that we are all about. For I am certain there are many who feel as I do.

* * *

Disciplinary action is being considered against Stan and the other demonstrators. If they broke a rule that is important to Dr. Heffner, the deans or the faculty, then by all means let what must be, be. But I ask just two things. I ask first that before deciding whether a crime has been committed or what punishment is to be meted out, that the President, Dean Brennan and the deans and faculty try for just one moment — just one moment — to understand what the students were *really* trying to do and trying to say. And then second, I would ask President Heffner to present a statement — in private if need be (though it should not need to be) — in which he tells us what it is like to be on *his* inside. For what it looks like from the outside — from where we are — is not what it must look like from the inside. And only if you tell us — as I have tried to tell you — can we ever really speak to one another or understand each other.

* * *

My great fear is that the members of the administration will give out only slight penalties to the demonstrators, thereby avoiding the real confrontation that needs to take place. For a slight penalty is bureaucratically the safest. The rule of authority is maintained while at the same time the real questions of war and death and morality are avoided.

The great tragedy in America today and especially in American education is that persons in power are largely willing to settle for the "smoothest course," for the path of least resistance. The administration *must* take the sit-in seriously — not in terms of finding the "best" punishment, but in terms of finding the real questions and perhaps even some tentative answers. For if Dr. Heffner and the deans do not take the war issue and what *it* is doing to *us* seriously, then we will all — students, faculty, deans, society — just jump back on the merry-go-round: students confronting administrators (University and otherwise) in hope of getting a *personal*, non-bureaucratic "hello" and administrators finding the perfect phrases for keeping students and their questions at arms length.

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Much of what I'm saying here I said in editorials last year. The only difference is — and it is such a basic difference — that I never realized that this was what I was trying to say. Instead — involved as we all become with the roles that are so easily accepted in place of ourselves — I phrased all of this in impersonal terms, in what was certainly (BDH)-bureaucracy language. It is all so simple if you can avoid speaking as a representative of one thing or another and just speak for the person you are. I and Stan and the other students who demonstrated or will in the future are persons, morally serious persons who have confronted serious issues and have made serious decisions. Dr. Heffner: you and the deans in your administration and the men and women in your faculty are the same persons we are. You are morally serious persons who have confronted serious issues and have made serious decisions. The only difference between us is that we see the issues from different places, and thus in describing what we see we use different images, and so seem to be speaking different languages.

If you are really interested in saving the University, and perhaps even American society, we must agree together to come together with a common attitude. Stan and I must be willing to understand you in what you are and what you say and what you do *as you understand yourself;* and you must try to see us as we see ourselves.

• • •

"You let me be in your dream and I'll let you be in mine" — Bob Dylan said that.

And we had better all soon understand it.

PASCAL KAPLAN '67

(Mr. Kaplan is a former editor-in-chief of this newspaper — Ed.)

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